

# Volunteering gives back at Project Fresh Start

Mary and Allison, a mother-daughter duo, joined other volunteers two years ago to distribute school supplies to families through the United Way of Portage County Volunteer Center's

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Project Fresh Start. Mary had not heard of Project Fresh Start or Project Fresh Clothes until an email circulated at her employer the

week before the event asking for volunteers to help with distribution. Mary signed up herself and her daughter right away, thinking it would be a good way for Allison to complete service hours for her school.

While most volunteers sign up for only a two-hour shift, Mary and Allison were there for most of the day. Their duty was to hand out bags of supplies to young children. They enjoyed themselves and had a lot of fun interacting with the kids.

At one point in the afternoon, Mary quietly asked to speak with staff for more information about the program. Mary, a single mother of two, wondered how a family qualified to receive supplies. Staff reviewed the income eligibility guidelines with her and discovered that her family was eligible for the program. Mary registered for Project Fresh Start on-site, and she and Allison picked out school supplies and gently worn clothing for both Allison and her younger brother.



*Volunteers help distribute school supplies at the United Way of Portage County Volunteer Center's Project Fresh Start in 2014.*

After receiving the supplies, Mary and Allison returned to their volunteer station and continued to volunteer until the event ended. Allison had a hard time containing her excitement. Not only did she have new school supplies to use for her upcoming 7th grade year, but she got to pick out new clothes to go with it.

Mary and Allison's story demonstrates the impact volunteering can have. When the two showed up that morning to volunteer, they were simply there to help the community and give back, not realizing they would be receiving something in return.

Project Fresh Start is set to take

place Saturday, Aug. 15. People can go behind the scenes during United Way's Campaign Kickoff Celebration on Thursday, Aug. 13, at 4 p.m. at Ben Franklin Junior High School in Stevens Point.

More information about how you can help United Way through donating or volunteering is available online at [www.unitedwaypoco.org](http://www.unitedwaypoco.org), by calling 715-341-6740, or by emailing [uway@unitedwaypoco.org](mailto:uway@unitedwaypoco.org). More information about how to receive help is available by calling 2-1-1, United Way's free and confidential information and referral service.